



# PANDEMIC PERFECTION

COVID-19 TOOK ITS TOLL ON GOOD OLD NEW ZEALAND, BUT AS THE WORLD WE KNEW WAS IN LOCKDOWN, IT GAVE ZACH KOHL TIME TO BUILD A KILLER INTERIOR!

The first time you lay your eyes on this car, the one thing that grabs your attention is that lush tan interior. With it contrasting against the vibrant green paintwork, it draws you in, and, once you're up close and personal to it, you cannot help but notice the craftsmanship, effort, and hard work that have gone into this fine example of a 1984 VH Holden Commodore.

The owner, Zach Kohl, grew up in a world with deep roots in Aussie-built cars and his father owned his fair share of them. Holden was a household name in

the Kohls' home. At the young age of 10, Zach got his first Holden — an HQ Wagon — a "doer-upper", as he says. Unfortunately, it was one that never made it to the end, and we've all had one of those. The good news is that, when Zach was a bit older, the wagon was traded for a VK Commodore. This is where the love really started for the first-generation Commodores. Going back 15 years now, no one was to know the extent of how valuable these cars would become. That beloved VK was stripped for parts, because getting insurance on it was near impossible when he was in his early teens! >



**Specs**

**1984 VH HOLDEN  
COMMODORE**

**ENGINE:** 308 Holden, stock crank, stock rods, flat-top JCC pistons, mild ported stock heads, Stage 3 Crow cam, Edelbrock Torker intake, 670cfm Street Avenger Holley carb, Holley fuel pump, Aeroflow hard and Teflon-braided fuel lines, MSD Pro Billet distributor, MSD Blaster 2 coil, MSD Street Fire ignition, triple-core aluminium radiator, Davies Craig thermo fan, Aeroflow push-lock heater hoses, Aeroflow Gilmer drive, Aeroflow fittings

**DRIVELINE:** Toyota W55 five-speed gearbox, short-shift kit, aftermarket flywheel, heavy-duty Holden pressure plate, 28-spline Ford nine-inch diff, Truetrac centre, 3.55:1 gears, custom single-piece drive shaft

**SUSPENSION:** Toyshop adjustable strut tops, adjustable Panhard, Monroe shocks, Dobi super-low springs, Nolathane bushes, Whiteline heavy-duty adjustable sway bars

**BRAKES:** Stock V8 booster, VT Commodore front calipers, VT front rotors, VR Commodore rear calipers, VR rear calipers

**WHEELS/TYRES:** 20x8.5-inch and 20x9.5-inch Simmons wheels, 245/30R20 and 265/30R20 Nankang tyres

**EXTERIOR:** Shaved locks, shaved aerial, relocated fuel filler, fibreglass bonnet scoop, fibreglass rear spoiler, narrowed front bumper, smoothed rear bumper, smoothed VB front air dam, blacked-out chrome, modified clear VL tail lights, PPG Shiny Green

**INTERIOR:** Full custom retrim, Recaro seats, Sportline steering wheel, Sportline shifter, Autogauge gauges, smoothed dashboard, custom full-length centre console

**ICE:** Alpine head unit, Digital Design BC6.5 component speakers, 1000W Orion four-channel amp, twin Digital Design 12-inch subs, 3200W monobloc Orion amp, twin 800cca Optima batteries

Passion turned into work for Zach. After finishing college, he set up Kohl Rod and Custom with his amazingly supportive father, building cars and launching a career.

What rolled into the shop soon after was a man with a dream, high aspirations, a broken gearbox, no money, but a first-generation Commodore! After having to give up the first one, and now being a lot older and wiser, and with the passion still in his heart, the Commodore was acquired. The original plan was to swap the gearbox out and get on to cruising the streets, but that plan didn't turn out, and the idea of mild went to wild. The stock 308 Holden engine was swapped out for a more economical 304 injected V8, and a Toyota Cressida was purchased for its W55 gearbox, which was soon bolted to the 304.

Business was going well at Kohl Rod and Custom, so the VH was put to the side for a while as they worked on building it up and building other people's dreams. Being forced to move the workshop later worked in their best interests regarding this car, as they conveniently moved next to an acid dipper — smart move! Zach's plans then changed, as they do. He wanted to take it a bit further, build himself more of a show car and make heads turn. The Holden was stripped down and sent to the dippers, returning >





almost rust-free, which is always a bonus! As Zach also had a HJ Holden ute on the side, one weekend, they decided to shoehorn the ute's 308 V8 into the VH and test it out. They had assumed it was a bone-stock 308, but soon realized it wasn't. It had actually had some work done to it at some point — in a good way. In typical Kiwi fashion, the realization came about by doing some burnouts and, sure enough, it was laying rubber and making clouds of smoke and noise much better than expected. The decision was then made to again replace the 'economic' injected 304, which now had its own leaky problems, and leave the 308 in. With a complete overhaul of the

engine bay, making it seamless and hiding all the wiring, throwing in some go-fast bits and cosmetic goodies, it was starting to take shape. After a few setbacks — for good reasons — it was back on full throttle to making progress on the VH. Zach started fibreglassing in the rear spoiler and front scoop, and, with the help of a good friend, Callum Hartel, the body was panelled and prepped for paint. After some wheeling and dealing, Justin Wright laid down an incredibly glossy finish of PPG Shiny Green. Unfortunately, progress again had to slow down as Kohl Rod and Custom was starting to really boom. Time was needed to build other projects, which did give Zach a lot of time to >





## Driver



### ZACHARY KOHL

**CAR CLUB:** Capital Rodders

**AGE:** 30

**OCCUPATION:** Car builder

**PREVIOUSLY OWNED CARS:** HQ Wagon, HJ Ute, VK Commodore, VL Commodore, VN Commodore, VR Commodore, VX Commodore, VY Commodore

**DREAM CAR:** Too many to mention, but the VH is definitely one of them

**WHY THE VH COMMODORE?** I had a Commodore project that I never finished when I was a teen, and I was always gutted I never got to drive it

**BUILD TIME:** Six years

**LENGTH OF OWNERSHIP:** 12 years

**ZACH THANKS:** Dad — 'Bomber' Kohl — for all sorts of help over the years; Mum — Carol Kohl — for lots of work on the interior; Callum Hartle, for the panel work and paint prep; Justin Wright, for the paintwork; my wife Zoe Kohl, for tolerating me putting way too much time into this thing

ponder how the end result was going to pan out. And, with Zach's fussiness, aiming for excellence, and creating a head-turner being the end goal, time was exactly what was needed. Close to the end of 2019, it was time to push the car to the final stage. With most of the work completed, now all that was really left to do was bleeding the brakes, and, of course, the interior. This was left till the absolute last, because, in these types of builds, rushing the last parts can make or break a car. Zach had conceived some pretty radical designs for the interior. It was just a matter of time, but with the business

booming, it was becoming hard to complete the interior. But Covid-19 setting in and sweeping the world, and forcing four weeks of lockdown, meant one thing to Zach: interior time! The radical designs became a reality! Customizing four Recaro bucket seats, a massive centre console with a custom dash and cluster, and one-off designed door cards, all wrapped in luscious creamy tan leather, it was absolutely outstanding. With the help of Zach's parents, the final stretch was complete. Who would have known all it would take was a global pandemic to finish the car? **V8**

